

## IN THE CLAIMS

The following is a complete listing of the claims now pending; this listing replaces all earlier versions and listings of the claims.

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Claim 1 (currently amended): A color-image processing apparatus comprising:

reading means for reading color image data stored in image storage means provided in said color-image processing apparatus; and

determination means for determining the similarity between the color image data and a pattern of a specific image,

wherein the color image data used by said determination means for determining ~~determines~~ the similarity between the pattern of the specific image and the color image data is read from said image storage means ~~that is read~~ at a predetermined time which is independent of a read instruction given by a user to read the color image data stored in the image storage means.

Claim 2 (currently amended): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said color-image processing apparatus comprises a computer, and wherein ~~[[said]]~~ the image storage means comprises a hard disk.

Claim 3 (currently amended): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the ~~color-image~~ color image data is stored in ~~[[said]]~~ the image storage means as a file.

Claim 4 (currently amended): An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising alteration means for performing alteration of the color-image data when said determination means determines that the ~~color-image~~ color image data coincides with the pattern.

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Claim 5 (currently amended): An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein ~~[[said]]~~ the image storage means and said determination means are controlled by an operating system on a computer, and wherein the operating system periodically controls said determination means to perform determination on the ~~color-image~~ color image data stored in ~~[[said]]~~ the image storage means.

Claim 6 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means adds determination-completed flag information to each piece of the color image data that has been subjected to determination.

Claim 7 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said determination means does not determine the similarity with respect to the color image data having determination-completed flag information.

Claim 8 (currently amended): An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said determination means determines the similarity when application software executed on a computer reads the color image data from ~~[[said]]~~ the storage image means.

Claim 9 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when an operation input from an operator is not provided for a predetermined period.

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Claim 10 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when a CPU (central processing unit) of said color-image processing apparatus does not execute application software.

Claim 11 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when said color-image processing apparatus is turned on.

Claim 12 (currently amended): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when copying the ~~color-image~~ color image data from an external storage device to the image storage means.

Claim 13 (currently amended): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when copying the ~~color-image~~ color image data from the image storage means to an external storage device.

Claim 14 (currently amended): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination during communication of the

~~color-image~~ color image data with an external apparatus connected to said color-image processing apparatus via a network.

Claim 15 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said determination means performs a determination by obtaining bit-map data other than data buried within the image file in a format of a tag.

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Claim 16 (currently amended): An apparatus according to claim 9, wherein, when another operation input from the operator is not provided for a predetermined period after starting an operation input from the operator, said determination means resumes determination processing for the ~~color-image~~ color image data for which a determination by said determination means has not been performed.

Claim 17 (currently amended): An apparatus according to claim 10, wherein, when the CPU of said color-image processing apparatus does not execute the application software after starting execution of the application software, said determination means resumes determination processing for the ~~color-image~~ color image data for which a determination by said determination means has not been performed.

Claim 18 (currently amended): A control method for controlling a color-image processing apparatus, said method comprising the steps of:

reading color image data stored in an image storage medium provided in the color-image processing apparatus; and

determining the similarity between the color image data and a pattern of a specific image,

wherein the color image data used in determining the similarity between the pattern of the specific image and color image data [[that]] is read from the image storage medium at a predetermined time which is independent of a read instruction given by [[the]] a user to read the color image data stored in the image storage medium.

Claim 19 (previously presented): A control method according to claim 18, wherein the color-image processing apparatus comprises a computer.

Claim 20 (currently amended): A computer program comprising:

code for reading color image data stored in an image storage medium provided in a color-image processing apparatus; and

code for determining the similarity between an image subjected to determination and a pattern of a specific image,

wherein the color image data used in determining the similarity between the pattern of the specific image and color image data [[that]] is read from the image storage medium at a predetermined time which is independent of a read instruction given by [[the]] a user to read the color image data stored in the image storage medium.

Claim 21 (previously presented): A storage medium according to claim 20, wherein the image storage means comprises a hard disk.